## THE THIRD DAY.

*19th February 1919.*

The Assembly met 12 noon on Wednesday, the 19th February 1919.

**19. The Forest Department—its present administration, working and yield—and suggestions for its better working.**

*Mr. A. K. Govindan Channar* (Member, Nominated) said that the forests formed the capital wealth of the State and that any attempts made to produce revenue at the sacrifice of the capital wealth should be discountenanced. That the Forest Department of Travancore was being worked under the abovesaid method, especially during the past 2 or 3 years, was the general impression prevalent in the country. The officers of the department should be guided by a sense of future requirements and should have enough far-sightedness to look far ahead. To look into the question of how much revenue could be obtained, to see how the revenue could be enhanced, to make the forests useful to the people and to institute an exhaustive enquiry into the evils that had come into existence in the administration of the department, it was highly necessary to appoint a Committee composed of officials and non-officials who should submit their report to Government. The system of coupe sales as carried on at present was a subject of considerable hardship to the people. The people of the country were not able to get timber for building purposes, because of the exploitation of timber under the coupe sale system by foreigners. The Member also complained that such sales were not being held after due publicity. The necessity for the cultivation of food crops in the State being great and the need for habitations being equally pressing, reserves in the midst or vicinity of inhabited localities should be thrown open for registry. All *eta* forests and swamps within reserved forests should be given for cultivation as before to applicants. Formerly, such marshy lands used to be cultivated with paddy and the poor ryots were getting a good yield also. When such lands were assigned for cultivation, they should be placed under the control of the Director of Agriculture. The means of communications in the forests should be improved so as to enable the controlling officers of the department to go into the interior forests and check the work of their subordinates. Scientific methods should be employed for felling trees and transporting them. Proper Working Plans should be prepared. It was in view to remove the above evils and to rid the department of administrative and other defects that a Committee was suggested. He requested that early action might be taken to constitute a Committee as proposed by him.

*Dewan's reply.*—Noted.

**20. Influence of indiscriminate disafforestation on rain and its effect on moisture and surface springs.**

*Mr. S. P. Kuttalalingam Pillai* (Member, T. I. C., Shencottah) said that the Shencottah taluk was being irrigated by three streams, the Kundar, Hariharanadi and the Hanumannadi which took their source from that part of the Puliyara reserve which forms the outer slope of the Travancore Hills. The outer slope alone formed the entire catchment area of the rivers. Out of the 16 square miles which was the total area of the Puliyara Reserve, about two-thirds fell under the basin of the rivers. The arable lands under wet cultivation depended solely upon the catchment area for the water needed for their irrigation. The policy of Government should, therefore, be the strict conservation of the forest forming the catchment area. The policy of the department during the past 50 years had not, however, been conducive to the preservation of the basin of the rivers. The indiscriminate denudation of the forests was allowed in the past by the introduction of the permit system. That system was, however, stopped not long ago, but a more destructive form of exploitation had been let in recently by the introduction of the coupe

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sale system. Whatever might be the intimate relation between the preservation of forests and a copious rainfall, none could dispute the fact that forests kept the springs full and the surface soil moist and thus conduced to the health of the country. Before the introduction of the systems of permits and coupe sales, the streams that fed the rivers had a steady and sustained flow of water long after the cessation of the rains ; but such streams, after the introduction of the processes of denudation, got dried up in a couple of days after the rains ceased. He understood that the felling of the trees had been ordered to be stopped for similar reasons at the instance of the Chief Engineer from the catchment area of the Kodayar. A similar step was all the more essential to conserve the forest in the meagre basin of the Shencottah rivers. He, therefore, prayed that Government might be pleased to take steps for the immediate stoppage of all fellings and removal of trees within the area referred to, and make efficient arrangements for the complete conservation of the entire area including private holdings.

*Dewan's reply.*—Noted.

**21. Provision of fuel reserves for estates situate in or on the boundaries of reserved forests.**

*Mr. R. J. A. Moore* (Member, South Travancore Planters' Association) prefaced his representation by saying that many of the estates belonging to his Association were 44 years old, having been opened first with coffee and tea and latterly with rubber. During that long time, firewood had been used for fuel and no provision was made for the future with the result that their supply of fuel would become non-existent in the near future. They had already planted up some areas with trees for fuel, but they would not be available for at least 15 years. As most estates paid revenue to Government in the shape of export duty and land tax, the Member requested that some help might be given so that the industry they were engaged in might flourish. The estates most in need of firewood were those situate in the Ponmudi and Ashamboo Districts. The matter had been brought to the notice of Government but with little success so far. The great stumbling block to a settlement of the matter was the fact that those estates lay within the borders of the Reserved forests. If the estate owners had known that such restrictions would be placed on further extension of their estates, they would have taken the necessary steps to provide themselves with additional lands. The State had about 2,344 square miles of Reserved forests or 30 per cent of the total area. What the Member asked was that about 1,000 acres from the Reserved forests be excised and sold to them at Rs. 25 per acre for supplying fuel to the estates.

In conclusion, the Member suggested that the vast areas of grass land lying within the Pallode Reserve be planted up with fuel or other trees. At present those grass lands gave no revenue to Government and, as long as they were covered with grass, trees were not likely to grow thereon, except of a very poor size and quality. Further, the grass was being yearly burnt off and that was a source of danger. His proposal was that the planters of the neighbouring estates be asked to clear up the land and plant it with trees for fuel, in the same way as and on terms similar to those on which the planters were looking after outlying roads.

To the Dewan's enquiry, the Member said that trees would grow in the lands mentioned by him.

*Dewan's reply.*—A detailed report will be called for from the Conservator of Forests on the Member's representation and the question considered on receipt of that officer's report.

**22. Cattle grazing Rules.**

*Mr. W. A. J. Milner* (Member, Central Travancore Planters' Association) complained against the new rules for the grazing of estate cattle under which proprietors of tea and coffee estates were permitted to graze only 10 head of cattle per 100 acres, free of tax. They came to know of the new rules only last year when the Forest Department requested that estates should take out passes for grazing cattle on Government grass land at the rate of 4 annas per head per annum. A protest was immediately sent in to Government pointing out that free grazing of

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